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Gender Ideology: For a ‘Third Sex’ Without Reserve

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Abstract

‘Gender ideology’ is a term used by many, but especially the Vatican, to chastise the view that sexual difference is more than just male and female, sexuality more than desire of the opposite. Each of the three books discussed in this article defends some version of this supposed ideology; each argues—though in different ways—for the need to move beyond a dimorphic account of sexual difference. Their arguments are taken up and deployed against what is here presented as the ideology of sexual dimorphism, as it is seen in the body theology of John Paul II. It is argued that such a theology dehumanises intersexed people, along with homosexuals, and undermines Christian soteriology. The church needs to acknowledge as fully human all who don’t conform to heterosexual dimorphism; it needs to embrace a ‘third sex’ without reserve.

Keywords

Gender ideology, hermaphrodites, eunuchs, intersex, third sex, sexual dimorphism, John Paul II, Michel Foucault

Susannah Cornwall (ed.), *Intersex, Theology, and the Bible: Troubling Bodies in Church, Text, and Society*

(New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). x + 241 pp.

Megan K. DeFranza, *Sex Difference in Christian Theology: Male, Female, and Intersex in the Image of God*

(Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2015). xvi + 311 pp.

Adrian Thatcher, *Redeeming Gender*

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). vii + 225 pp.

Where better than the Catholic Church for learning how to be queer? Elizabeth Stuart has said that she first learned the instabilities of gender from living in a world where men wore frocks and women the names of male saints. ‘Growing up surrounded by men wearing clothes society labelled feminine whom I had to relate to as “father”, taught by women who were my “sisters” or “mothers” with names such as Augustine and Bernard Joseph taught me that societal categories were not fixed, that they could be played around with and that the Church was a space in which gender shifted.’¹ In such a space you already knew, if only unconsciously, about the difference between sex and gender, the biological and the social, and the fragility of their connection. Girls could have boys’ names and—though this is less common in English-speaking countries than elsewhere—boys could have girls’ names (as in Marie-Dominique Chenu). At the same time, of course, the Church decried any departure from what we now call heteronormativity, a decry that was often the work of those who had embraced, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, a celibate lifestyle, those who had become ‘eunuchs’ for the Kingdom (Matthew 19:12).²

The lack of fixity between gendered names and sexed bodies is an example of gender fluidity, an example of what many describe—deride—as gender ideology or theory. Of course the latter is more than an observation, though it certainly starts from such, or includes it. Gender theory is also an advocacy, or so it seems to those who decry it, those who think it a distortion of what they see as immutable givens. One might think the naming of ‘gender ideology’ an ecclesial success story, since Gillian Kane, writing in *The Guardian*, traces the origin of the term to the Vatican in the mid-1990s, to ‘a time when sexual and reproductive rights were formally recognized by the UN, and when gender entered the lexicon of the global body.’ But for Kane, gender ideology is an illegitimate term, a ‘catchall phrase to sell a false narrative and justify discrimination against women and LGBT people.’³ And in this she is not wrong. If the Vatican, in the

¹ Elizabeth Stuart, *Gay and Lesbian Theologies: Repetitions with Critical Difference* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), p.109.

² See further Mark D. Jordan, *The Silence of Sodom: Homosexuality in Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp.198-205 (‘The Excesses of Eunuchs’).

³ Gillian Kane, ‘“Gender Ideology”: Big, Bogus and Coming to a Fear Campaign Near You’, *The Guardian* (30 March 2018). See further Sally Baden and Anne Marie Goetz, ‘Who Needs [Sex] When You Can Have [Gender]? Conflicting Discourses on Gender at Beijing’, *Feminist Review*, 56 (1997), pp. 3-25; and from a different

mid-1990s, saw the deployment of 'gender' at the UN and elsewhere as a cover for homosexuality, then its attack on 'gender ideology' was an expression of homophobia.⁴

I begin with an invocation of gender fluidity and its naming as ideology, ironic as this is, because the three books reviewed in the course of this article are all aimed, with differing degrees of intentionality, against the ideology that names 'gender ideology'; against the ideology we might follow Gilbert Herdt in calling the 'ideology of sexual dimorphism',⁵ but which is also complementarianism, and that I will later call the ideology of Genesis 1.27. These books are so aimed because they are all concerned with some of the givens that Vatican and other ideologues must overlook. These givens are what I am calling the third bodies of the intersexed, the homosexual, and the transgendered, though chiefly I shall pay attention to the first of these: the intersexed, those once named as hermaphrodite or androgyne. These are very obviously the concern of the book by Megan DeFranza and the essays edited by Susannah Cornwall, who herself has written at length on the intersexed.⁶ But, as we shall see, it is also an interest of Adrian Thatcher's work, in which he too wants to lead us beyond a binary view of the body, returning us to an earlier, more fluid understanding of human flesh.

None of these books are exclusively concerned with the Catholic Church. DeFranza pays it most attention, writing for Evangelicals and conservative Catholics, addressing in some detail the body theologies of Stanley J. Grenz and John Paul II.⁷ There are interesting congruences between these two thinkers. However, I shall mainly attend to the Catholic tradition, to that Vatican gender ideology which—as both

perspective, Prudence Allen, 'Gender Reality vs Gender Ideology', *Solidarity: The Journal of Catholic Social Thought and Secular Ethics*, 4.1 (2014), pp. 1-36 (esp. pp. 19-23).

⁴ See further Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 174-203 ('The End of Sexual Difference?'), esp. 174-192 (p.182).

⁵ Gilbert Herdt, 'Preface' to *Third Sex, Third Gender: Beyond Sexual Dimorphism in Culture and History*, edited by Gilbert Herdt (New York: Zone Books, 1994), 11-20 (p.13).

⁶ See Susannah Cornwall, *Sex and Uncertainty in the Body of Christ: Intersex Conditions and Christian Theology* (London: Equinox, 2010).

⁷ DeFranza's concern to persuade conservative Christians that intersexed people need to be taken seriously leads her to play down the issue of homosexuality, which is mainly mentioned in passing. Intersexed bodies are more obdurate than same-sex orientations. DeFranza's orientation to the conservative may also explain a sometimes apparent naïveté in the discussion of dominical sayings, as if they were verbatim reports.

DeFranza and Thatcher indicate—threatens not only women and LGBTI people, but some of the Church’s core doctrines about Christ and salvation.⁸ Finally, I will briefly suggest—following Adrian Thatcher—how we might think to undo this gender ideology. My expositions will become ever briefer, my thinking less diaphanous, toward the end of the article, but in all I want to impress the importance of these books, their aid in helping all churches move beyond present gender troubles. My argument might be thought of as inhabiting theirs; their openness to the ‘third’ taken up and redeployed, hopefully without injury to their thought and provoking enough for readers to taste and see for themselves.

Ideological Bodies

In 2016 Pope Francis, in his exhortation on the joy of love (*Amoris Laetitia*), warned of the challenge posed by ‘various forms of an ideology of gender that “denies the difference and reciprocity in nature of a man and a woman and envisages a society without sexual differences, thereby eliminating the anthropological basis of the family”’.

“This ideology leads to educational programmes and legislative enactments that promote a personal identity and emotional intimacy radically separated from the biological difference between male and female. Consequently, human identity becomes the choice of the individual, one which can also change over time.”⁹

Francis was quoting from the final report (*Relatio Finalis*) of the fourteenth ordinary general assembly of the synod of bishops, the synod on the family of 2015. It may be noted that the pope also repeated the report’s acknowledgement of the difference between sex and gender, but with its caveat that they can be distinguished but not separated.

⁸ In part this review article draws on a paper of the same title that was presented to the 10th anniversary conference of the Centre for Catholic Studies at Durham University, 18-20 April 2018.

⁹ Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia (The Joy of Love)* (2016), ¶56 (pp.44-45).

The pope's reference to gender ideology is as clear as any to be found elsewhere in Vatican teaching. It gestures towards unnamed thinkers, unnamed texts, to discourses that assail the fixity of sexual difference while promoting a fluidity that would allow people to think and rethink their gender for themselves. It echoes earlier pronouncements, such as those by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger in 2004. In a *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World*, the cardinal noted that in the perspective of gender ideology 'physical difference, termed *sex*, is minimized, while the purely cultural element, termed *gender*, is emphasized to the maximum and held to be primary.'

The obscuring of the difference or duality of the sexes has enormous consequences on a variety of levels. This theory of the human person, intended to promote prospects for equality of women through liberation from biological determinism, has in reality inspired ideologies which, for example, call into question the family, in its natural two-parent structure of mother and father, and make homosexuality and heterosexuality virtually equivalent, in a new model of polymorphous sexuality.¹⁰

Again, no actual texts are named, no names given. The accused must volunteer themselves. And why are their views described as ideological? That too is undetermined, but for the most part, Vatican documents use the term 'ideology' as a slur. It marks a hostility toward the teaching of the Church as that is understood within the Vatican. It also works rhetorically to obscure the fact that the Vatican's position is itself ideological: it is, I want to suggest, a teaching which pretends to a universality it doesn't have, and this obscures its particularity, which is a particularity that precisely refuses to acknowledge certain facts, certain givens that it must ignore in order to misrepresent the world, in order to say that which is not. And it is precisely the refusal of reality that renders it ideological and permanently unstable, in need of constant

¹⁰ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger and Angelo Amato, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World* (31 May 2004), ¶1.2. This is discussed in Adrian Thatcher, *Redeeming Gender* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p.97.

repetition against the real. This is why there is a hermeneutic of continuity, a constant policing of discourse within the Vatican 'ideosphere'—to borrow a term from Roland Barthes.¹¹ And so I move to my chief exhibit of Vatican gender ideology.

Unlike his own theology of the body, the 'theology of the body contained in Genesis is', John Paul II tells us, 'concise and sparing with words.' Yet it merits extensive commentary because its contents are in some sense 'fundamental', 'primary' and 'definitive'. 'All human beings find themselves in their own way in that biblical "knowledge."' ¹² It is the knowledge of the difference between man and woman, a difference which is captured almost entirely in the woman's maternity. 'The difference', John Paul writes, 'is shown only in a limited measure on the outside, in the build and form of her body. Motherhood shows this constitution from within, as a particular power of the feminine organism'.¹³ Yet, in regard to Genesis, we might think John Paul an unreliable narrator.

John Paul II repeatedly introduces a reciprocity into Genesis that is not there. Man, we are told, 'has been created as a particular value before God ..., but also as a particular value for man himself; first, because he is "man"; second, because the "woman" is for the man and, vice versa, the "man" for the woman.'¹⁴ But in Genesis, Eve is made for Adam, not Adam for Eve, as St Paul knew when he noted that 'man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man' (NRSV I Corinthians 11.9-10). Eve is made in order to bear Adam's children, which Paul notes when he goes on to say that now 'man comes through woman' (11.12), and which John Paul recalls when he remembers that no matter how alike or mutual man and woman are, they are also almost entirely different, though this again is contrary to Genesis. John Paul tells us that '[w]oman's constitution differs from that of man; in fact, we know today that it is different even in

¹¹ Roland Barthes, *The Neutral: Lecture Course at the Collège de France 1977-1978*, edited by Thomas Clerc, translated by Rosalind E. Krauss and Denis Hollier (New York: Columbia University, 2005 [2002]), p.86.

¹² John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, translated and introduced by Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006), 21.3 (p.211).

¹³ John Paul II, 21.3 (p.211). Pope Francis repeats this identification of 'woman' with 'mother'. See Thatcher, p.172.

¹⁴ John Paul II, 9.1 (pp.161-162). In support of reciprocity, John Paul cites Genesis 2.23, the verse in which Adam speaks and Eve remains silent.

the deepest bio-physiological determinants.’¹⁵ But of course this is precisely what we don’t know today. At the end of the nineteenth century, Sir Patrick Geddes (1854-1932) could argue that males were composed of catabolic cells that paid out energy, while females were made of anabolic cells, which conserved energy.¹⁶ But his view was well gone by the end of the twentieth century, and now we are told by modern genetics that there is very little difference between people: ‘we differ by only sixty out of thirty thousand genes’.¹⁷ It is time to introduce the third.

Third Bodies, Third Monsters

The third, in John Paul’s theology of the body is the child, that in which ‘the man and the woman ... know each other reciprocally’.¹⁸ But this third is but a repetition of the two, or one of the two, as male or female. I want to introduce a more radical third that calls into question the duality at the heart of the complementarian ideology espoused in papal, Vatican teaching. This is the non-spousal ‘third sex’ that is neither male nor female. This third sex is here and at first a conflation of two different kinds of contradiction, both of which Vatican gender ideology must either ignore or deny, and which it denies through ignoring.

¹⁵ John Paul II, 21.3 (p.211). This echoes the teaching of Hans Urs von Balthasar in *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, vol.2 *The Dramatis Personae: Man in God*, translated by Graham Harrison (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1990), pp.365-366. See further Gerard Loughlin, *Alien Sex: The Body and Desire in Cinema and Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp.153-154.

¹⁶ Patrick Geddes and J. Arthur Thompson, *The Evolution of Sex* (London: Walter Scott, 1889), p.266; and Patrick Geddes and J. Arthur Thompson, *Sex* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1914), pp.77-80. See Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990), p.6. Geddes, of course, is just one of many examples. Darwin before him, Freud at the same time, and Alfred Kinsey afterwards, would all think that human bodies came in just two distinct forms. But Geddes roots the division deep in biology.

¹⁷ Joan Roughgarden, *Evolution’s Rainbow: Diversity, Gender and Sexuality in Nature and People* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2004), p.208. Of course, versions of Geddes’ dimorphism linger on, and not only in theology. More recent versions argue for a fundamental difference between male and female brains. See further, Thatcher, pp.167-168, drawing on Melissa Hines, *Brain Gender* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹⁸ John Paul II, 21.4, (p.211).

The first contradiction is the body that though male or female is not spousal in John Paul's sense, not ordered to heterosexual bonding. I will say little about this body, except when noting its conflation with the second contradiction, which more directly disconfirms papal ideology. This second 'third' is the intersexed body, the body that rebukes John Paul's insistence that human being is created either male or female; 'male and female created he them' (KJV Genesis 1:27; 5:2). Not all bodies—not all people—are born male or female. A significant number are born between these two sexes, except that their arrival calls into question the idea of a singular male or female identity, a pure masculinity or femininity.¹⁹ No such things exist apart from their performance, made real through incessant repetition.

Those who are now said to be intersexed were once known by other names, classically as hermaphrodites or androgynes, and biblically, perhaps, as eunuchs. 'Perhaps' because a eunuch is commonly understood as a male deprived of his sex, either by his own or another's hand, as in Jesus's reference to such (Matthew 19:12). But Jesus also mentions those who are eunuchs from birth, and so many—such as Megan DeFranza in *Sex Difference in Christian Theology*²⁰—take this as referring to those otherwise named as hermaphrodites in ancient literature.²¹ However that may be,

¹⁹ John Hare offers evidence from biology in support of this claim, in 'Hermaphrodites, Eunuchs, and Intersex People: The Witness of Medical Science in Biblical Times and Today', in *Intersex, Theology, and the Bible*, pp. 79-96 (p.93).

²⁰ *Sex Difference*, pp. 70, 81-83, 102-106. De Franza is also a contributor to Cornwall's volume under review, where she notes that the biblical character of the 'barren woman' might also include those now named as intersexed: DeFranza, 'Virtuous Eunuchs: Troubling Conservative and Queer Readings of Intersex and the Bible', in *Intersex, Theology, and the Bible*, pp. 55-77 (p.58). DeFranza's essay here is preceded by another that discusses the eunuch in biblical literature: Joseph A. Marchal, 'Who Are You Calling a Eunuch? Staging Conversations and Connections between Feminist and Queer Biblical Studies and Intersex Advocacy', pp.29-54.

²¹ Susannah Cornwall in her own contribution ('Laws "Needfull in Later to Be Abrogated": Intersex and the Sources of Christian Theology', 147-171) to her edited volume (*Intersex, Theology, and the Bible*) is quite hesitant about identifying biblical eunuchs with the intersexed, carefully arguing that absence from the biblical text does not mean absence from the biblical world (pp.149-152), while noting how at least one intersexed Christian recognised himself in Jesus' reference to those who are eunuchs from birth (p.148). Cornwall's main concern is to argue for the importance of 'experience' as a fourth source (after scripture, tradition and reason) for Christian theology, and draws on interviews

these names both reveal and obscure. They reveal that there were—that there have always been—third sex people, but the nature of their thirdness or intersexuality is hidden.²² We cannot read back onto their bodies any of the several conditions now named as intersex, whether hypospadia, various forms of congenital adrenal hyperplasia, varying effects of androgen insensitivity syndrome, chromosomal variations, and what today is considered true hermaphroditism (or hermaphrodisism) — the presence in one person of both testicular and ovarian tissues, a ‘trait that’s rare in our species but common in others.’²³

Given the differences, it is perhaps misleading to think of the intersexed as a third sex between two others. At best, the idea of a ‘third sex’ is a place holder for the complexity of human embodiment. ‘To a greater or lesser degree we are all intersex.’²⁴ But the invocation of a third sex was often a way of referring to those who would become known as homosexuals, those who were thought of as combining both sexes: men within women’s bodies, women within men’s. This is neatly caught in Michel Foucault’s description of nineteenth-century homosexuality as an ‘interior androgyny, a hermaphrodisism of the soul.’²⁵ We may trace a separating of these two kinds of third, of homosexuality and intersexuality, but if doing so we should note that, early if not later on, the fear of one was the detestation of the other: that a person might get away with

with a number of intersexed Christians. Her argument is typically detailed and nuanced.

²² Augustine supposes that there have always been hermaphrodites, *androgyni*. See *The City of God against the Pagans*, edited and translated by R. W. Dyson (London: Penguin, 1984), Bk XVI, ch.8 (p.709).

²³ Roughgarden, p.293. See further DeFranza, *Sex Difference in Christian Theology*, pp.25-44.

²⁴ John Hare, ‘Hermaphrodites, Eunuchs, and Intersex People’, p. 93. The invocation of a ‘third sex’ is not meant to preclude different ways of counting; of thinking, for example, of five sexes, as suggested by Anne Fausto-Sterling in ‘The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female Are Not Enough’, *The Sciences* (March/April 1993), 20-24. The ‘code of “thirdness”’, as Gilbert Herdt puts it, is heuristic, ‘emblematic of other possible combinations that transcend dimorphism.’ See Herdt, ‘Preface’, pp.19-20.

²⁵ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* vol.1 *An Introduction*, translated by Robert Hurley (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984 [1976]), p.43. [Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité I: La volonté de savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), p.59.]

homosexuality under cover of intersexuality—though these were not the terms or concepts employed.²⁶

Foucault details how in 17th century France people ceased to be executed simply for being hermaphrodites and instead were offered the choice of becoming one or other sex, of living as either a man or a woman. Problems arose, however, if, having chosen one sex they then used their other sex to enter into what we would call a homosexual relationship. This happened with one hermaphrodite, who having become a man then used his other sex with another man, and having been discovered in this was burned alive.²⁷ A happier case from 1601 is of a Maria who, having become Martin, lived with a woman, but on being found to have no manhood about him was sentenced to burning, but on appeal, while still judged to be a woman was ordered to live as such chastely.²⁸ Foucault finds this significant as the first case to involve a proper clinical diagnosis,²⁹ and for the explicit naming of the hermaphrodite as monster.³⁰

A similar story comes from 1765, in which Anne Grandjean, who on finding herself attracted to girls decided to live as a boy, moved to Lyon and married Francoise Lambert. Being exposed, she was convicted of having lived with a woman and sentenced to the pillory. But on appeal her case was dismissed, but with the requirement to live as a woman without entering into any further intimacies with women. Foucault's interest in this second case is that, at the end of the eighteenth century, the medical testimony rejects the idea of the monstrous hermaphrodite as a mixture of two sexes, and instead

²⁶ One can discern an alike fear—that people might get away with homosexuality under cover of thirdness—in the writing of someone like Oliver O'Donovan, but with the cover now the marriage of transsexuals. See Oliver O'Donovan, *Transsexualism and Christian Marriage* (Bramcote: Grove Books, 1982). This early piece by O'Donovan offers a good example of Protestant dimorphic fundamentalism.

²⁷ Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France 1974-1975*, edited by Valerio Marchetti and Antonella Salomoni, translated by Graham Burchell (London: Verso, 2003 [1999]), p.67.

²⁸ Foucault, *Abnormal*, p.68.

²⁹ Foucault, *Abnormal*, p.69, The clinical account was given by Jacques Duval. See further Joseph Harris, 'La Force du Tact: Representing the Taboo Body in Jacques Duval's *Traité des hermaphrodites* (1612)', *French Studies* 57.3 (2003), 311-322.

³⁰ Foucault, *Abnormal*, p.71. However, Augustine already found the hermaphrodite monstrous, though entirely willed by God. See *The City of God*, Bk XVI, ch.8 (pp.707, 709). Roland Barthes picks up on the monstrosity of the hermaphrodite from Foucault. See *The Neutral*, p.191.

proposes that there are only those with defective genitalia that render them infertile. Now there are ‘only eccentricities, kinds of imperfection, errors of nature.’³¹ And this—Foucault argues—allows for a new kind of monstrosity to emerge in the nineteenth century, which is a ‘monstrosity of character’. It is a shift from the ‘juridico-natural to the juridico-moral; a monstrosity of conduct rather than the monstrosity of nature.’³² It is the monstrosity of homosexuality, to be named as such later in the nineteenth century.³³

Foucault finds that in different times different figures have been found monstrous. First, the person who is both human and animal, second the conjoined twin, who is both one and two, and finally, in the eighteenth century, the hermaphrodite, who is both male and female. In all these cases the monstrosity is that of the third, the one who crosses the divide between two separate domains, something that is contrary to nature, and, more decisively, contrary to conventional and legal categories: people the law cannot accommodate.³⁴

These cases, or at least Foucault’s reading of them, suggests both the conjunction of hermaphrodite and homosexual as monstrous thirds, and that even as the site of monstrosity shifts from one to the other, from the hermaphroditism of the body to that of the soul, there remains the need to eliminate such thirds, to secure the realm of the two, the simple dualism of sex. And it is this that we see replayed in the body theology of John Paul II, which in this respect is very much a theology of the nineteenth century.

A third ‘third’, to which I am paying even less attention, is the transgendered person, who chooses to change his or her gender to either the opposite of that given, or to settle between—as ‘they’ rather than ‘he’ or ‘she’. Yet it is this further contradiction that gives rise to one of several ironies. For it is the case that many of those who abhor the idea of changing gender are yet willing to have the intersexed changed, often without their consent, undertaken when they are too young to know, let alone resist, what is being done to their bodies. In the eighteenth century the discovered

³¹ Foucault, *Abnormal*, p.72.

³² Foucault, *Abnormal*, p.73.

³³ For the invention of homosexuality see Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* vol.1, 36-49 (esp. p.43); and Gerard Loughlin, ‘Gay Affections’ in *The Oxford Handbook of Theology, Sexuality, and Gender*, edited by Adrian Thatcher (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) 608-623 (pp.611-613).

³⁴ Foucault, *Abnormal*, p.66.

hermaphrodite was forced to choose one sex or the other, male or female, and did so by adopting the clothing and possible occupations of their chosen sex, their amorous relationships accordingly limited as well. A similar choice was forced upon people in the twentieth century, and still in the twenty-first, but now advances in medical science mean that it is not only their clothing that can be changed, but their bodies also, subject to surgical interventions that will conform them to one sex or the other. This starts in childhood, and so the people making the choice are most often the parents of the intersexed, under the guidance of doctors, and not the intersexed themselves.

The most notorious case of this kind was what the physician John Money, of John Hopkins University, did to David Reimer, who, as a young boy, suffered severe damage to his penis following a botched operation for phimosis. He was taken under Money's care and belief in the social construction of gender. David was further surgically castrated, a vagina created, and his name changed from David to Brenda. Turned into a girl and treated as a girl, s/he would be a girl. Post-puberty, Brenda sought to become David again. He later married, but then separated from his wife, and in 2004 took his own life, aged 38. 'Life for him was always a wager and a risk, a courageous and fragile accomplishment.'³⁵ Reimer was not himself intersexed, but Money treated him as if he were, using the apparent success of turning David into Brenda to justify the reconstruction of any number of intersexed people as male or female, and at an early age, before they could decide for themselves.³⁶

The pressure to conform to a dimorphic world is much the same in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries as in the eighteenth. Everyone is made to fit the ideology of Genesis 1.27. The tolerance of some for such interventions, while abjuring transgender operations, is perhaps explained by the fact that conforming the intersexed to male or female is forced upon them. It is not a wilful change on their part, and so not the monstrosity of self-direction, the refusal of instruction, when 'human identity becomes

³⁵ Judith Butler, 'Doing Justice to Someone', in *Undoing Gender*, 57-74 (p.74).

³⁶ See further DeFranza, *Sex Difference in Christian Theology*, pp.51-53. Money appears as Peter Luce in Jeffrey Eugenides' novel, *Middlesex* (London: Fourth Estate, 2013 [2002]), which is discussed in Nathan Carlin, 'A Pastoral Theological Reading of *Middlesex*', in *Intersex, Theology, and the Bible*, pp.99-119; and in regard to medical interventions, see Stephen Craig Kerry, 'Intersex and the Role of Religion on the Path to Health and Well Being', in *Intersex, Theology, and the Bible*, pp.121-144.

the choice of the individual, one which can also change over time', the horror expressed in my earlier quotation from Pope Francis.³⁷

I have noted how John Paul II discovers a mutuality between Adam and Eve in Genesis that is not there, while at the same time he also finds a vast difference between man and woman, which again is not present. John Paul II is firmly wedded to a nineteenth-century dualistic understanding of the human body that is almost the exact opposite of that which is in Genesis. Thus we must distinguish between what I have called the ideology of Genesis 1.27 and Genesis itself, where the derivation—and so the continuity—of Eve from Adam is much more open to the third precisely because it is not committed to the two. But in order to think this notion of the body as a continuum, I want to introduce a further dualism, which is that between what Thomas Laqueur describes as the one-sex body of the ancient world and the two-sex body of modernity.

Mixing Sexes

Laqueur proposes that sex as we know it was invented at some point in the eighteenth century. By sex he means the distinction between man and woman as a division between two very different kinds of body, suited for very different kinds of occupation. We have already encountered this division between male and female in John Paul II. Laqueur contrasts this modern view with that of a more ancient one, which thought there is really only one kind of body, of which male and female are variants, inversions of one another. Male genitals are on the outside and female on the inside, but otherwise they are the same, with both producing seed which when mixed produces males or females depending on the relative 'heat' of each, on the temperature, as it were, of the mixture. Laqueur's chief exponent of the latter view is the second-century physician, Galen, whose texts remained influential throughout the medieval period and into the early modern.

Thatcher considers some of the criticisms that have been made of Laqueur's work, not least as marshalled by Helen King,³⁸ but judges—rightly I think—that the

³⁷ *Amoris Laetitia*, ¶56 (p.45).

basic thesis stands up. The one-sex model was operative in much ancient thought—we see something like it in the opening chapters of Genesis—and aspects of it persist, but from the seventeenth century onwards, a little earlier than Laqueur’s initial eighteenth century dating, a two-sex model gains currency, and even if there are forerunners of such an idea, it gains a new authority from a newly emerging, empirically based, medical science that by the nineteenth century has usurped any previous authorities, not least the theological.

Thatcher’s interest is to consider the current gender trouble in the churches once it is acknowledged that much earlier Christian thought was informed by the one-sex model, a formation that is lost to view when a modern two-sex model is projected back onto earlier texts and arguments. Thus, when woman was but an inversion of man, albeit a cooler, weaker version, there needed to be no worry that she was part of the flesh redeemed through the incarnation, little question that the hotter, stronger, more perfect version of the human should represent Christ at the altar. But once a two-sex model predominates these conclusions become doubtful. Is woman really included in Christ if she is now so very different from man?³⁹

Vatican teaching—according to Thatcher—posits ‘two human natures: male nature and female nature, which are absolutely different.’⁴⁰ It follows that ‘[i]ntersex, third sex, and transgender people are officially made to vanish.’⁴¹ They are not fully human. But also vanishing, later if not yet, are women.⁴² For when there are two

³⁸ See Helen King, *The One-Sex Body on Trial: The Classical and Early Modern Evidence* (London: Routledge, 2013).

³⁹ Angelo Cardinal Scola, *The Nuptial Mystery*, translated by Michelle K. Borrás (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2005), p.285.

⁴⁰ Thatcher, p.98.

⁴¹ Thatcher, p.93.

⁴² Of course one ancient solution to this problem was to think that women would become men in the life to come, or that women and men would become neuter, angelic. However, the tradition resisted this idea, insisting on the preservation of sexual difference, however transformed, however unnecessary for reproduction. Patricia Beattie Jung extends the preservation of sex in the resurrection to include the intersexed, though in a slightly ambiguous way: ‘in risen life we will be transformed into people of the apposite ... sex, that is, into people who are capable of being reconciled and drawn into union with one another in Christ.’ See her ‘Intersex on Earth as It is in Heaven’ in *Intersex, Theology, and the Bible*, 173-195 (p.186).

natures, male and female, ‘the male Christ has no female nature.’⁴³ Female nature is not assumed by the Word. Thatcher thinks that this endangering of both Christology and soteriology derives from the unrecognised mixing of both one-sex and two-sex theories of human being. He traces it in both ecclesial documents and in the thought of influential theologians, such as Karl Barth and the inevitable Hans Urs von Balthasar, whose theology Thatcher judges to be ‘immoral’.⁴⁴

We might wonder if Thatcher has not overread someone like John Paul II, overread the distinction between male and female as two natures. But indeed, John Paul does present sexual difference as an ontological difference, and in doing so threatens the salvation of women. A similar concern is expressed by Megan DeFranza, who notes that John Paul’s enthusiasm for the spousal meaning—heterosexual orientation—of the body as the *imago Dei*, threatens the humanity of those who have no such orientation. She is thinking of the intersexed, those ‘without a clear masculinity or femininity’ who ‘would at best know only a distorted view of love and at worst be placed outside the possibility of love.’⁴⁵ They would in fact be placed outside the human, alongside the homosexuals.⁴⁶ DeFranza also notes the problems that heterosexual spousality poses for non-vowed celibates.⁴⁷ Vowed celibates—such as John Paul himself—are deemed, by John Paul, to be within the spousal matrix, because married to Christ, though this might put male vowed celibates—such as John Paul himself—back outside, since married to a man, even if only phantasmally.

⁴³ Thatcher, p.98.

⁴⁴ Thatcher, p.106. Thatcher has been reading both Corrine Crammer and Tina Beattie on Balthasar.

⁴⁵ DeFranza, p.212.

⁴⁶ See further, Gerard Loughlin, ‘Catholic Homophobia’, *Theology* 121.3 (2018), 188-196.

⁴⁷ DeFranza, p.213.

Conclusion

The Church, of course, does not have to think that heterosexual spousality or nuptiality is the mark of the *imago Dei*. This is a recent, modern development.⁴⁸ It is of a piece with the modern idea of sexual difference as a fundamental, ontological difference, with understanding male and female as the only possibilities for being human. All non-conforming beings, those who are third to the duality of the two, are excised from the realm of the human, unless somehow changed, reconstructed, made to fit. And again, and of course, the Church does not have to accept this understanding of sexual difference. It is not there in Genesis. In Genesis, Adam and Eve are one flesh (Genesis 2.23), and this, of course, is how Adrian Thatcher proposes to redeem gender, to find it but secondary to the *kind*—humankind—in which the Word became incarnate; the Word into which all are incorporated. ‘The essence of humankind is Christ.’⁴⁹

We do not have to ontologise masculinity and femininity, male and female. We do not have to turn them into idols. We can think beyond, or before, sexual difference. We can remember that when Adam and Eve came out of the garden they discovered a world already full of people, that they were not the only two (Genesis 4). They discovered the third, waiting to meet them.

⁴⁸ See Fergus Kerr, *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians: From Neoscholasticism to Nuptial Mysticism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp.175-179, 199-201; and for a discussion of Kerr’s argument and of how nuptial mysticism renders the homosexual less than fully human see Gerard Loughlin, ‘Nuptial Mysteries’, in *Faithful Reading: New Essays in Theology in Honour of Fergus Kerr OP*, edited by Simon Oliver, Karen Kilby and Thomas O’Loughlin (London: T&T Clark, 2012), pp.173-220.

⁴⁹ Thatcher, p.178. ‘The whole Christ in his/her divine being is beyond distinctions of sex, and the humanity of Christ, as tradition east and west insists, is inclusive of all humans whatsoever, for He is confessed by the church as *homo* not *vir*, *anthròpos* not *anèr*’ (p.179).